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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the identification, curriculum, and evaluation components of the Secondary School Experiential Learning Community, a program which currently serves 83 gifted but economically disadvantaged students at the Richmond (Virginia) Community High School. Personal, social, and academic program components are noted. The identification process focuses on an identification matrix which combines measures of ability, achievement, creativity, motivation, leadership, and interview results. Program evaluation focuses on assessment of the school environment in light of the mission and goals of the school; and assessment of the responses of the student to the environment, primarily as reflected in individual growth profiles, and secondarily as reflected by group norms and profiles. (DB)

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An Identification/Curriculum and Evaluation Model for Gifted Black Adolescents: Part I

Presented to the

Conference for the Exceptional Black Child

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An Identification/Curriculum and Evaluation Model for Gifted Black Adolescents:

Introduction

The systematic denial to members of minority groups of equal access to gifted education is an established fact. Often, such denial is not conscious but is a function of the use of an IQ cut-off score. This paper reports upon an effort to create, implement, and constantly retool a program for adolescents, the majority of whom are Black, and who are academically gifted, or potentially gifted. The emphasis upon potential reflects the belief that developed gifts do not spring full blown from the head of Zeus. They result from opportunities provided for the person to interact with nurturing circumstances. An old proverb is very relevant to this belief, i.e. the price of your hat ain't the measure of your brain. Gifted Black adolescents are a population at risk. Their identification and selection is a political problem, as well as an educational problem.

Models for identification, curriculum, and evaluation are described and illustrated here. The descriptions include four characteristics which have been suggested by Hector Myers as being the defining characteristics of a model: (1) a purpose, reflected in questions asked and variables studied; (2) a structure which describes relationships; (3) pivotal constructs and a lexicon of terms that explain and describe; and (4) a realistic methodology. (Myers, 1976 p. 141)

There is much evidence to support the view that social environment plays a dominant role in determining the average IQ level of Black children and that both social and generic variables contribute to individual variation. It may be that poor and disadvantaged children develop some special intellectual strengths as a result of adaptation to a distinctive environment. Unforunately, cognitions available to culturally different children are not measured on traditional tests. However, there is little research which pursues this point of view. There is such strong evidence of creative powers within this population that Torrance can say, "in the future we shall have to depend upon creatively gifted members of disadvantaged and minority cultures for most of our creative achievements." (Fall, 1978 p. 295)

G.S. Hall spoke to the issues surrounding adolescent education in 1904 (Vol 1, p. 47).

> Young children grow despite great hardship but later adolescence is more dependent upon favoring conditions of the environment, disturbance of which more readily causes arrest and prevents maturity. No age is so responsive to all the best and wisest adult behaviors.

Unfortunately, many of the experiences of the gifted Black adolescent have conspired to "cause arrest and prevent maturity." Since they readily sense the inferiority of much of their education and since they see that many who have succeeded in school are still excluded from the social and economic rewards, they often reduce their efforts to the level of rewards expected. This adaptation reduces the pain of working as hard or harder than whites for fewer rewards. It also provides excuses for the uneven allocation of resources since it can be argued by the decision makers that Black adolescents cannot

learn.

The Richmond Community High Program

In 1977 a business man in Richmond, Virginia issued a request for a proposal for a school for academically gifted, economically disadvantaged students. Virginia State University submitted a proposal and was awarded the grant to create, in collaboration with Richmond Public Schools, an alternative high school for students who were gifted, or potentially gifted.

Eighty-three students attend Richmond Community High School (RCHS) during the current academic year. The school project, which is technically known as the Secondary School Experiential Learning Community (SSELC), succeeds in providing for most students what the Commonwealth of Virginia requires for grades 8-12 in four years. Graduates are required to be literate in "Basic" computer language and many will graduate with the ability to use Fortran as well. Future studies are a pioneering part of the SSELC curriculum. Through-out the Community High School Program experiential learning is emphasized.

The program of the Richmond Community High School is designed to create a learning environment which porvides a sensitive balance of activities to nourish the mind, body, and spirit. The focus of the program is upon the development of academic talents. However, it is recognized that such a focus may suggest a dichotomy between intellect and feeling and reflect an inadequate conception of the nature of human beings. We are only dimly beginning to perceive the implications of right/left brain research and of the African concept of vitalism. Though, for purposes of analysis and for

program development and evaluation, the dichotomous constructs of cognitive (knowing/learning) and affective (feeling/valuing) are employed, the program components and activities are planned to provide for continuous interaction of intellectual, emotional, and physical learning. It is understood that personal development, content mastery, and skills development proceed simultaneously. Thus, curriculum is judged to be relevant when it connects the affective or feeling, aspect with the cognitive, or knowing, aspects.

Commitment to this point of view is also reflected in the official program definition of giftedness which includes three types of characteristics, i.e. intellectual, creative, and psychosocial. It is recognized that characteristics signifying giftedness are the product of interaction of underlying competencies and nurturing environments and that some students identified as potentially gifted may be expected to develop and begin to demonstrate the appropriate characteristics as they participate in the program. Emphasis is upon confirming human possibilities rather than limitations. Since Richmond Community High is expected to serve, and does serve, a culturally diverse group, the Richmond Community High community is assisted to develop appreciation and understanding of differences and to see beyond differences to possibilities. In such an environment a major boost is given to the development of the positive self-concept most conducive to optimum learning and self-actualization, i.e. becoming what one is capable of being.

There are three aspects of the RCHS mission--personal, social, and academic:

PERSONAL--The assessment of the characteristics of students and the development of individual learning plans based upon those characteristics are expected to contribute to improved intellectual peroformance. A variety of activities and settings are made available to students in order that they may choose the learning tasks and settings which they prefer. Students have as much freedom as they can handle, but teachers armed with knowledge of individual characteristics are in a position to intervene, assist, or advise at the right moment.

SOCIAL--Richmond Community High is designed to be a voluntary community of learners characterized by shared trust and committed to respect for the intrinsic worth of every individual and to a view of differences as positive forces. Denigration of difference is not permitted. There are opportunities for exploration of alternative life-styles and for exploration of many aspects of racial and ethnic cultures.

ACADEMIC--This aspect of the mission emphasizes the necessity to teach academic skills and ways of dealing intellectually with complexity. For academically talented young people the aim is to achieve the intellectual power of scholarship. Since it is understood that learning achievement represents the product of goodness of fit between the learners, the tasks, and the instruction, care is taken to attempt to create learning conditions for each individual which promote and test thinking and understanding and which develop symbolic capacities. Special care is taken to assist students to overcome deficiencies in performance at the same time that they pursue interests and develop higher level cognitive

processes.

As the SSELC Project has developed, three broad program goals have come into sharp focus. These goals are related to the contributions which this project is making to the improvement of education for academically gifted, or potentially gifted, students. They include:

1. Development of a set of valid and practical procedures for identifying gifted children and, especially, potentially gifted children with unique educational needs.

2. Creation of an educational experience for the gifted which is truly developmental in the sense that it meets the unique needs of children from culturally diverse and economically deprived backgrounds at the same time that it meets unique requirements of gifted education.

3. Development of curriculum materials and guide lines which meet the primary goals of education of the gifted and which demonstrate delivery systems which give promise of meeting the unique educational needs of Black and other non-main stream adolescents.

The Identification Model

Broadening concepts of giftedness have become a major concern in the education profession in the 70's. Traditional methods of assessment, which too often assume generic dificits in disadvantaged or culturally different populations, have not been predictive of real-life ability to cope with mainstream society. Education has discriminated against children with needs different from the norm. The historical emphasis upon capacity for learning has been to perceive school learning as primarily dependent upon the presumed ability of the student, rather than upon the quality of the learning environment. There does appear to be growing recognition that school failure and student underachievement are socially determined.

Even so, as John and Leacock note (1979, p. 77) such recognition has not prevented new interpretations of these failures which blame the victims and, often, co-exist with arguments about innate or class deficiencies. The gifted, or potentially gifted Black adolescent is probably the most frequent casualty of the children from varying ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds. It is the central position underlying this program that educability is a universal human characteristic and that special gifts and talents are distributed proportionately in all ethnic, racial and class groups.

The mandate of the SSELC Project is to provide an alternative secondary school for students who are identified as potentially gifted and economically disadvantaged. Such a mandate guarantees that the majority of the students will be drawn from the majority group in the secondary school population of Richmond, i.e. Black adolescents of low socio-economic status.

The identification of gifted Black adolescents is a special problem in that many Black youth are underachievers and have had their perceptions of themselves as failures confirmed. Also, giftedness in Blacks is frequently manifested in ways which are not characteristic of gifted in the mainstream culture.

Their problem may be manifested in disruptive or implusive behavior and boredom may be intensified by frustration of a school environment which does not provide the necessary setting for the social and emotional self-clarification, confidence, and growth of Black people. It should be noted here that accurate information about their strengths, is particularly sparse. Since it must be assumed that there are a variety of gifts and talents

that may be discovered; since it is recognized that characteristics signifying giftedness are the product of interaction of underlying competencies and nurturing environments and that some students identified as potentially gifted may be expected to develop and begin to demonstrate the appropriate characteristics as they participate in programs tailored to their unique needs; and since the identification of gifts and talents, including some types of cognitive skills, is still a relatively unrefined diagnostic skill, multiple means of identification are called for. The Baldwin Matrix was considered to be a promising approach and was adapted for use by the SSELC Project. (See Figure I) It was adjusted to include the three factors of the SSELC definition of giftedness, i.e. ability and achievement, creativity, and psycho-social characteristics of motivation, and leadership. It should be noted that this adapted Baldwin Identification Matrix is designed to give a good deal of weight to clinical judgements, to summarize a variety of data, and to provide an estimate of learning potential referenced in part to local norms. It assumes that scholastic potential is often masked by socio-cultural differences.

The identification process is managed by the Principal, the Coordinator, and the school staff assisted by students, parents, and Policy Board members, and monitored by a committee of the Policy Board acting as surrogate for the school system and the University. Prospective students may refer themselves or be referred by schools, parents, or community persons or agencies. School counselors provide test data, information on socio-economic status, and secure teacher responses to a Renzulli-Hartman instrument which assesses motivation

Name_____

Date_____

Identification Matrix*

Indicate points after each test or other score
Add total number of points earned by students

Test or other evidence	Scores 5	4	3	2	1
	95%tile	90-94 94%tile	85 89%tile	80 84%tile	75 79%ti
1. Ability Test	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. SRA or other Reading scores	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. SRA or other Math scores	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. SRC or other Social Studies scores	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. Torrance Test of Creativity	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. RAP	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. Writing Sample	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. Renzulli-Hartman Scale Motivational Characteristics Activities	36 ( )	32-35 ( )	28-31 ( )	24-27 ( )	18-23 ( )
9. Renzulli-Hartman Scale Leadership Characteristics	40 ( )	36-39 ( )	32-35 ( )	28-31 ( )	27-30 ( )
10. Interviews	Superior ( )	Very Good ( )	Good ( )	Average ( )	Below Avera ( )

Total Score_____

*See Alexinia Baldwin, The Baldwin Matrix. DOK Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY, 1978.

[1]Please specify test.

Figure I

and leadership, and assist in arranging for testing sessions to secure other data such as writing samples and the Torrance Test of Creativity, and for interviews. All prospective students are interviewed by a team of staff, RCHS students, and Policy Board members. Parents are asked to respond to a questionnaire. All of this information is reviewed by the Selection Committee, summarized and entered on the Matrix. Some children are eliminated in the first screening. For others, requests may be made for individual testing. Finally, Matrix scores are calculated for the remaining prospects, a cut-off score is established, and final choices are made by the Selection Committee.

Evaluation

Many problems are faced in the process of measuring educational impact. Evaluation of an educational program is concerned with educational effectiveness, i.e. the degree to which the program succeeds in achieving its goals. The methodological problems involved are often quite difficult, beginning with the problem of defining and measuring goal achievement. In addition, it is difficult to identify intercausal connections between program activities and student outcomes in a naturalistic setting.

Many statements of educational goals are, because of the nature of their content, too general in nature to allow for precise measurement. Behavioral objectives, statements of objectives couched in terms of changes in student behavior, lend themselves to more precise measurement but their very specificity may foreclose other highly desireable outcomes. This is not to argue that specific behaviors should not be employed as indicators of more global

outcomes, for example, creativity, original thinking, problem solving, self-esteem, etc. These indicators however, must not become the definitions of these outcomes.

A widely held view regarding evaluation of educational programs favors a value-added concept. That is, that schools and programs should be judged by the changes in students in relationship to their capabilities at the start. A generally used criterion for program effects is the standardized test of educational achievement after appropriate controls have been exercised for intervening variables. Schools and programs are often compared on this basis. However, any two measures of academic aptitude or achievement will correlate very highly, probably because of the general nature of cognitive skills which they require. Much of the variance which remains can be attributed to variables such as SES, sex, etc. Thus, very little of the variance may be attributable to the particular program. Part of the problem lies in the use of standardized tests which are constructed to be widely appropriate to ensure their usefulness for many educational experiences. They may be too general to measure the specific cognitive and affective outcomes of a particular program. More valid measures may be found in achievement tests geared especially to specific courses or program components. Such a procedure, however, makes it difficult to compare schools and programs. Yet school and program comparison are probably useless unless they reveal meaningful differences. Development of a greater variety of criterion measures would seem to be imperative, especially in programs which

attempt to go beyond the development of intellectuality. If such outcomes as creativity, future problem solving abilities, self-esteem, and moral sensitivity are appropriate for schools, then appropriate measures must be developed. In addition, since the testing system has played a large role in the denigration of Black and other culturally diverse children by the educational system, there must be serious questions about the appropriateness of the psycho-metric model underlying the usual educational evaluations.

Attempts to solve the dilemmas noted above have resulted in efforts to develop an internal evaluation model which addresses itself to process as well as product, which seeks measures of growth and achievement in addition to test scores, and which includes naturalistic observations which can help to identify the structure and elements of the environment. The latter is important since the ecological psychologists have demonstrated that specific settings can instigate interactions and that variations in the structure of the environment can account for differences in interaction behavior (Barker, 1951). Selected variables implied in the program description, especially in its goals and objectives, can be operationally defined by sysematic observation and description of the educational experience of the students. They may be conceptualized within the context of the behavioral domains established for the program, i.e. cognitive I, II, and III and Affective I and II (See Figure II).

OVERVIEW

RCHS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

COGNITIVE

Cognitive I	Cognitive II	Cognitive III	Affective II	Affective I
a) Acquiring knowledge and understanding	a) Thinking critically: Translating Applying Synthesizing and Evaluating	Affective III a) Thinking creatively	a) Valuing and appreciating	a) Developing self-concept
b) Evaluating and applying		Synthesizing		b) Working wit others
		Evaluating		
		Intuiting		
		Transforming		
		Production		
		Divergent		

Figure II

The major role of the internal evaluation is to provide information to decision makers which will contribute to program improvement. The model recognizes as important elements in the accountability of the Richmond Community High School community, students, staff, parents, Policy Board, Richmond Public School system, and Virginia State University. A program must be held accountable for the goals which it identifies and the environment which is created to achieve those goals. Reference to the Richmond Community High School Mission Statement will indicate the debt owed to John Dewey for the concept of the centrality of the students' experience in his learning. One may note also the importance given to the creation of a community of learners. Thus, accountability will be reflected in this evaluation model by: (1) assessment of the ecological environment in light of the mission and goals of the school; and (2) assessment of the responses of the student(s) to that environment, primarily as reflected in individual growth profiles and secondarily as reflected by group norms and profiles. Information will be generated for feedback to appropriate members of the community.

Theoretical Propositions Basic to the Model

1. Genetic constitution pre-determines many human characteristics of the nature organism, but outcomes may differ as a function of differences in other environments (Parsons, 1964).

2. Complex environmental variables interact in the development of human behavior (Hunt, p. 161).

3. The environment is seen to consist of higly structured arrangements of objects and events which coerce behavior in accord with their own dynamics (Barker, 1968).

4. Internalization of the socio-cultural environment provides the basis for the central core of the human personality (Parsons, 1964).

5. Some of the behavior of people within ecological boundaries will be the same, some will differ. The greater the variance and instability of environments, the greater the contribution to behavior variance (Barker, 1968).

6. Cultural and individual perspective can be employed simultaneously upon the same body of data, a reversibility of perspective which reveals the psychological significance of cultural patterns and the cultural significance of individual behavior (Sapir,1934).

7. Phenomena are measured as events in a dynamic system of interdependent and reciprocally interactive factors whose pattern of influence evolve as processes in time and space (Myers, 1976, p. 141).

Goals of Internal Evaluation

To describe actual operation of program components and to document the concurrence with or deviation from the proposed program and established goals.

To create a data base to support new curriculum, identification, assessment, and management initiatives.

To identify elements and strategies which respond most sensitively to the needs of underachieving students and to the needs of members of a student group who are culturally diverse.

To provide sensitive and accurate description and assessments of the development of students enrolled in the program.

To identify and evaluate relationships between process and outcome variables and between environment and process variables.

To create a data base to support decisions of Richmond Public Schools, Virginia State University and the Policy Board for expansion, continuation etc. of the program.

Students Identification, Assessment, and Program Planning Model

A comprehensive model has been developed to assist in planning,

developing, implementing and evaluating instruments and processes for identifying and creating instruction for gifted and potentially gifted students. It can also contribute to the development of in-service programs. (See Figure III)

Components of the model are:

Assessment Variables -

1. Intellectual aptitudes - (See Cog. I & II) i.e., the basic capacities to acquire the skills and abilities associated with academic and career success.

2. Creative aptitudes (Cog. III) - Creative application of the ability to find and solve problems. Creativity is the important factor in giftedness in science, music, or dance, or sports. It permits the production of new ways of doing things, of performing, or of producing unusual products.

3. Psycho-social or affective characteristics - these are the characteristics that help children to become what they "are capable of being." They include motivation, leadership, energy, etc.

Assessment Techniques -

These assessments include measures of ability, achievement, creativity, performance, and self-concept. They depend heavily upon interviews, observations, and personal contacts.

Program Components -

The mission of Richmond Community High School is to provide optimum, personal, social, and academic development within a learning community which wmphasizes scholarship, respect for the human spirit, future studies, and first hand experience as an aid to learning program components which address themselves to the mission are interdisciplinary studies, single disciple studies, humanistic studies, future studies, and community studies.

Richmond Community High School
Student Identification, Assessment and Program Planning Model

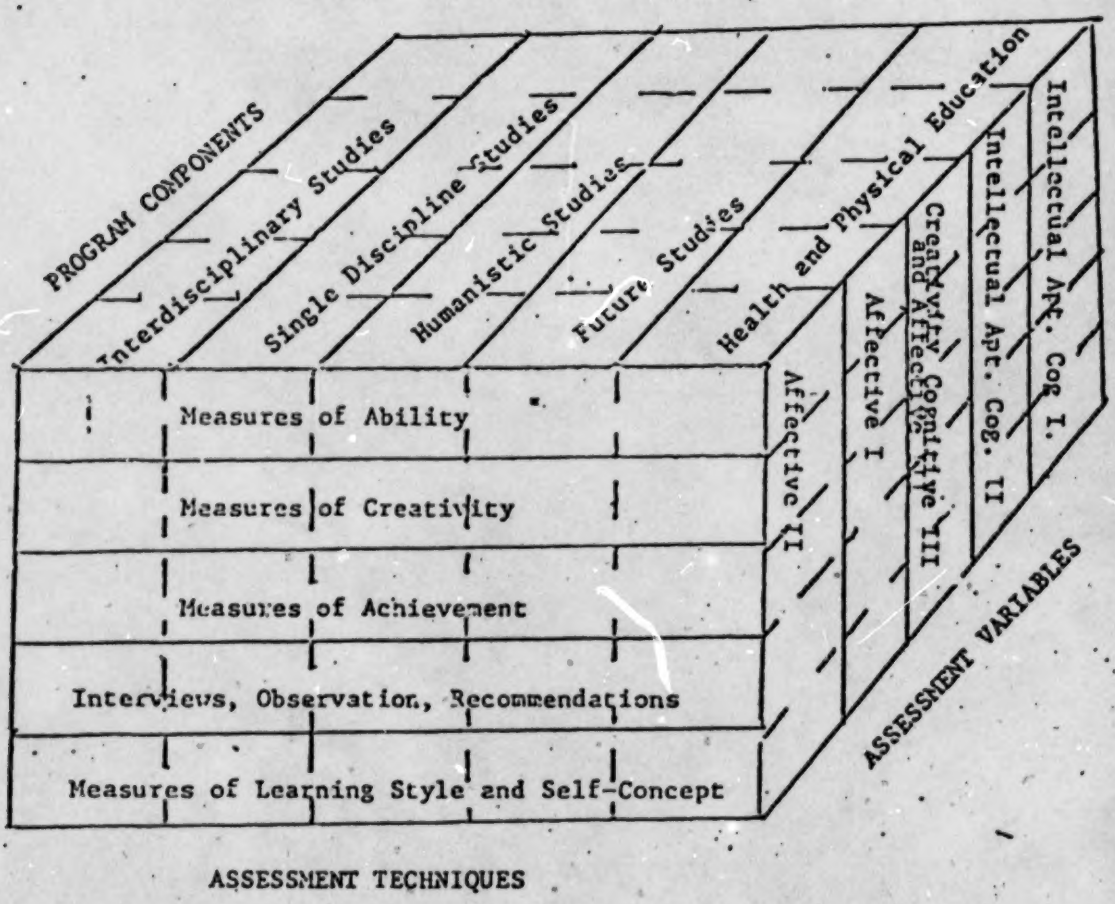

Figure III

Organizational Systems Analysis

Ecological Environment

Physical-location, facilities, boundaries.
Social-values, structure, authority decision making, roles, leadership, inter-organization relationships, power, administration.
Learning Environment-mission/goals, objectives, knowledge, curriculum, organization, strategies, content, resources, evaluation, problem solving, planning, conflict resolution, human relations.

The Person

Student-(see development profile)
Teacher-personality, style, strategies, values, etc.
Parents/guardians-goals, values, SES, etc.

Profile of Student Development

Learning Characteristics

Mastery of Basic Skills-Cog. I
Knowledge, comprehension, application

Critical Thinking-Cog. II
problem finding, analysis, and solution, convergent thinking

Creativity Characteristics- Affective I and II

Divergent Thinking, evaluation/synthesis

Psycho-social Characteristics- Affective I and II

Self-Concept
Values Clarification
Motivation/Task Commitment
Leadership
Adaptability

Profile of Student Development
Matrix of Key Factors and Scources of Data

Key Factors

Intellectual Factors	Non-intellectual Factors Affecting Intellectual Performance
Cog. I and II	
Student - Ability Tests - Group and Individual Standardized Achievement Tests Teacher Made Tests PSAT and SAT Tests of Critical Thinking - Ex. DAT Tests of Creativity Computer Science Competency Demonstration Future Problem Solving Solutions Independent Study Projects Self-Evaluation Logs and Journals Audio and Video Tapes Film	Interviews Self-Evaluations Personal Orientation Inventory Tennessee Self Concept Interest-a-Lyzer Personal Learning Plans Test of Psycho-motor Skills Logs and Journals
Richmond Community High Family Heads Anecdotal Reports Observations Evaluation of Logs and Journals Evaluation of Personal Learning Plans Lesson Plans and Activities Interaction Analysis	Records of family/school/community service Evaluation of family participations Evaluation of personal learning plans
Richmond Community High Teachers Anecdotal Reports Evaluations of Performance Class Activities Questionnaire Evaluation of Future Problem Solutions Student Contracts Independent Study Projects Evaluation Interaction Analysis	Observation Anecodotal Reports
Mentors and Consultants Anedotal Reports Student Product Evaluation Evaluation of Future Problem Solving Solutions	Anecdotal Reports Observation

Intellectual Factors	Non-Intellectual Factors Affecting Intellectual Performance
Counselors Anecdotal Reports Cumulative Records	Observation Anecdotal Reports Cumulative Records Health Records
Parents and Guardians Parent Interviews Questionnaires	Parent Interviews Questionnaires
Peers Interviews	Interviews Socio-metric ratings

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